

VI.

THE POLITICAL ALLIANCE OF THE SOUTH WITH THE WEST.

A POLITICAL alliance seems to be forming under the inducement, or, more properly, the pressure, of material causes between the Southern and Western people.

That it will take place, or already exists, seems to be a recognized fact. The problem is, whether the alliance is to be under the control or influence of any other or higher consideration than the mere advancement of the material prosperity and political power of the geographical sections concerned. It will be an unfortunate alliance, and in time become disreputable, if it is formed upon the basis of a selfish mutual support in efforts to seize and hold the power of the Government for the mere aggrandizement of the South and West. In the prospect of the power that such an alliance would give, the South has presented to it a terrible temptation, and it will require sober thought and a firm reliance on principle to enable us wisely to lay our course in its presence, and to follow the line of duty with steadiness.

Recent experiences have certainly more than confirmed the forebodings of our earlier statesmen with results which they in vain attempted to forecast—illustrating the dangers of sectional combinations for political purposes.

It is not yet one year since we have emerged from a state of social and political antagonism, in which sections of the Union were arrayed against each other in violent political strife, supported by the Government with actual hostilities. For a long period the dominant party, united solely upon sectional questions, abandoned all reliance on civil authority, except as an agency subordinate to the military power, and ruled States that were in alliance with the minority party with force and arms. We of the South mistrust such combinations. We have not yet been long

enough in the condition of restored constitutional rule to feel safe against a relapse into the unhappy state from which we have just escaped. Our fears are the natural consequence of a profound conviction that those who have once wielded the sceptre of arbitrary and irresponsible rule, and have grown rich with spoliation and powerful by conquest, will be slow to acquire the self-denial that will enable them to return to just and constitutional methods of government.

Those departures from the true spirit of our system of government had their origin in sectional controversies relating to social and political questions, exciting the strongest feelings of which the human heart is capable. Strong as were these feelings, however, these controversies would never have resulted in a great public war, nor in any serious disturbance, if the material interests involved had been general and not local. If slavery, for instance, had existed in all the States under the protection of their local laws, although the number of slaves may have been small, its being so diffused would have prevented the concentration of opinion and influence against it to the degree of intensity that would have produced any serious collisions between the disputants as to the morality or policy of the system. No party in any State would have been strong enough to have attempted its suppression by force. It was the sectionalism of the question that alone made it dangerous to the peace of the country. It was this that caused many States, as separate governments, to array themselves for its protection, and to form a confederacy so as to unite their power in its defense.

It may be safely assumed that no question, however exciting or important, can ever endanger the peace of the country beyond a temporary interruption, unless it should bring one section of the Union, in which States are acting aggressively in concert, into array against another section, in which States are engaged in a common purpose of defense. In the absence of this feature of sectional division which remained as a result of the war, and which gave popular support to the coercive measures of Congress, the military rule, which displaced free constitutional government in the Southern States during a period of nine years, could not have been sustained.

Any single Northern State could have successfully resisted

such wrongs if directed against its government. If New York or Delaware had been treated in like manner with Louisiana or South Carolina, or any other of the Southern States, because they refused to give the sanction of their power in Congress to those measures, the mere effort to include those States in this category would have utterly broken the power of the movement.

There was still enough of popular power in the majority of the Northern States, growing out of the fierce passions aroused by the war, that could be directed against the South as a section, to enable Congress and the Executive to continue this oppressive course, so long as it was applied to the outlawed States ; but this power would have been broken in the first effort to apply this terrible regimen to the smallest State of the North.

Without the coöperation of the States as governments, the United States would have but little ability to make war even against a foreign power. Its power would be less when engaged in war upon a State of our Union. Its small army of enlisted men would soon be exhausted, and it would have to look to the States for their contingents. If these contingent troops should refuse to cross their State lines, as once happened, there would be an end of the matter. To illustrate, if the Senate and the President had resolved to inaugurate Mr. Hayes, while the House of Representatives had declared Mr. Tilden elected, and had determined to inaugurate him, the question as to which of them should accede to the presidency would have been necessarily settled by the final determination of the States as to the party to which they would furnish men, money, and material of war. The people would not have gone pell-mell into the struggle, nor would long have continued in such a lawless mob. They would have taken counsel, every man of his own State, to know what was the lawful course of duty. And so the States would have speedily settled the matter, or else the Union would have been utterly destroyed. The States would have survived the Union. New York would not have fought Pennsylvania; Connecticut would not have made war upon Massachusetts; Kentucky would not have invaded Ohio; Alabama would not have fought any State, but would have placed an army of observation upon her border, and would have warned all malcontents that she was engaged in keeping the peace within her own territory,

and that none should molest her. Alabama would have said to those who were contending for the possession of the Federal power: "We can live without your assistance, and can protect and provide for every right, liberty, and advantage, that our people need; and we have no such interest in the question as to which of two men should be inducted into office as President, as to justify us in shedding a drop of the blood of our sons in the quarrel." As the vote was not merely sectional in the presidential election, such a policy as it is believed Alabama would have adopted, would not have provoked against her the hostilities of her sister States. They would have respected her neutrality.

This glance at the possibilities of such a conflict as appeared to be imminent during the winter of 1876-'77, and the difficulties that would have obstructed Congress, or either House, in conducting such a war, serves to illustrate the truth of the suggestion that we are in no danger of ever engaging in a general warfare except upon questions that are wholly sectional; and the further fact that war cannot exist between the States of this Union, until the States themselves so decree.

The Federal Government cannot embroil the States in war with each other without their consent, nor can it embroil the people of different sections of the country in war with each other against the objections and the prohibitory power of the State governments, so strong and powerful and wisely great is the just influence and the authority of the States in their capacity to preserve the peace of the country and the rights and liberties of the people.

In view of these matters, and aside from our lessons of experience, whose bitter teachings will long remain to counsel us to moderation and prudence, it seems that the one great danger to be avoided in our policies for the future, next in degree to that policy which contemplates the degradation of the rights and powers of the States themselves, is the arraying the States or their people, the one against the other, upon questions that divide them sectionally, and relate to the social and personal rights and liberties of the people.

Secure against these dangers, we can exercise the full powers of government, State and Federal, in all the nice adjustment of their delicate relations, with as much freedom and safety, and

with more power for good, and with a more energizing stimulus to progress, than can be done by the most absolute governments.

Outside this line of dangerous shoals we can feel secure against shipwreck, whatever violent gusts of passion or powerful currents of interest may drift us into apparently perilous courses. It is very important to the whole country that we should, at this moment, realize that our government, State and Federal (for while they are distinct they are one), is safe from destruction through political or social agitations ; to the end that entire freedom of thought and speech, and of action, shall be indulged in and encouraged in reference to the next great matter of dispute—our financial system.

This question is not altogether sectional (yet, unhappily, it is too much so), and does not belong, therefore, to the category of dangerous questions, such as those relating to the stability of our Government. State does not stand against State, nor section against section, in solid array, in respect of any phase of this question. In every State, opinion is divided upon the questions relating to finance, and the opposing interests which create or shape these opinions are the interests of men who live in the same communities. It is called the conflict of labor and capital—a correct designation of the issue, when the laws of the land arbitrarily divorce the interests of these classes ; but it is a sad misnomer for the competition of labor and capital, which is properly developed when the laws forbear to antagonize interests and classes which naturally unite in their efforts for the general welfare.

Indeed, there are but two subjects, so far as now appears, upon which there is any apparent ground to apprehend danger of sectional disagreement. One of these presents the problem of the social and political future of the colored races, including the Negroes, Chinese, and Indians, in this country ; and the other, a socialistic feature of the white family, now presenting itself, in the Northern States, in politics, in the form of agrarian and communistic organizations. A common danger, or danger quite similar in each section, arising from causes that have a close economic affinity, if not a natural relation to each other, will be apt to develop a strong conservatism in all of the endangered sections that will unite the people to repress rather than encourage the evil.

The most certain and effectual means of avoiding this evil will be found in relegating every trouble, as it may arise, to the State where it is found, for settlement, and in resisting its being drawn into controversy in Congress, or in national politics. The States of the South will never exert their power to subject the Northern States to the terrible rule of the Commune, nor to impose Chinese citizenship and suffrage upon the Pacific States. With some valued assistance from States in the North, which they gratefully acknowledge, they have, through these agencies, established for themselves the fact that is now irreversible, that they will not be subjected to negro supremacy.

Clouds there are in some quarters of the horizon which darken the country with threats of social strife; but at the zenith all is clear and reassuring. The conservatism of the entire country will hereafter prove to be stronger than the radicalism of any section.

To return to the question now so prominently before the country—the money question: Will the people of the South and the West, including the Pacific States, unite in a general political alliance against the people of the Northeast, because they differ from them on questions of finance? Or have they so united against us? We must answer, not for this cause alone. The fact that the States east of Pennsylvania and north of Delaware may be “solid” for a mono-metallic currency, with gold for its standard, or unit of value, or that they may be solid in Congress on any phase of this subject, only argues that their largest interest and the greater number of their electors require their representatives to unite on a given policy. A minority of the people there (perhaps a large one) are not enthusiasts for high-priced money, or a narrow basis of commercial credit, or for a small volume of circulating coins. And the people in all sections of the country would equally condemn any measure or line of action, in Congress or elsewhere, that might be classed as extraordinary, in attempting to force upon the Government, or upon the people or States of any section of the country, a policy which they deem injurious to their interests, and are endeavoring to prevent by constitutional means. The great majority of those who are striving to reverse the policy that destroyed our silver currency are those who are and have been unwavering friends of the Constitution.

The solidarity of the people of a State, or of several States,

on a question that is confessedly one of mere policy, is not dangerous, even if it is sectional. With a change of their local interests, their views would be likely to change, or, if adhered to with the utmost obstinacy, they would never become dangerous to the country, because they relate to a subject that no other combination of States, as such, could be formed to control. If silver is re-monetized, for instance, no number of States could nullify the law; and if it remained demonetized, no number of States could restore it as Federal money.* If in one entire section of the country it is found that its local and peculiar interests draw every State and every man into a solid union for common protection against a mere policy which they consider injurious to their welfare, it is not, in any serious sense, dangerous, or even reprehensible, that they should stand together. Such sectionalism is only the strongest proof that it must be based on an honest and reasonable conviction of the necessity for such unity. This was illustrated in the proposed nullification of the tariff laws by South Carolina. No people ever acted with more honesty, or under a more bitter sense of wrong, than they did, but other States having the same grievance could not be induced to attempt such action to break down laws that were not directed exclusively against a certain section. The strife was great, but the danger was more apparent than real. It was wild agitation, but the substructure of popular allegiance to the Constitution resisted it successfully. It is quite otherwise when the policy which draws a section of the country into solid union is aggressive, and is directed against institutions that are peculiar to another section. In that case, the States of the section which is assailed will take up the quarrel, and there is then serious danger of collision between States, or with the Federal Government.

It would be a hazardous experiment, even so recently after the severe admonitions of the great civil war, to attempt to smother Christian civilization in the Pacific States by giving additional encouragement to Chinese immigration. Those States would resist such action of Congress, because the civilization of

* What the States could do with silver as a legal tender for State taxes, and debts payable within their jurisdictions contracted between persons, is not germane to the subject in hand, but it is a question that must arrest the attention of those who claim the power for Congress to destroy its legal-tender quality.

China is in every sense hostile to their civilization. Such legislation would be sectional, and would excite all the madness of an aggressive social and religious warfare.

In the arbitrary, needless, and oppressive policy of adding to the public debt, without any new consideration, the burden of an agreement to pay it in coin as it matured, when it stood on no higher ground, certainly, than the debt to the army and navy, and to the pensioners of the war, who were paid in depreciated paper currency, there was no sectional aggression. And so, in the rapid contraction of the currency to increase the power of capital, while, with continually decreasing means of payment, the public debt is being anticipated, there was no sectional aggression. And so, in the destruction of silver money as a legal tender for the debts of the rich, while it was retained as the only coin the poor could use to pay their small debts, which are generally less than five dollars, and the only thing they could demand or get at nightfall for a day's work, with which they could buy bread for the morrow, there was no sectional aggression. These were party policies, not measures of sectional aggrandizement. The party in possession of the government when these measures were adopted is the responsible party.

Now, more than two-thirds of the country, united by a pressure which disregards party ties, demands a reversal of this policy, and less than one-third of the country is united almost solidly and sectionally to oppose the restoration of silver money to its former estate, and to demand that the iron grasp of contraction shall not be relaxed. In this "solid" section they say that a change of this hard policy will lessen their profits, or the value of their investments. In the remaining country, if more than two-thirds may be called a remnant of the whole, they say that to continue this policy is to destroy them, and to sweep the fruits of many years of toil into the hands of their creditors.

As between the sections thus divided, and upon this question of justice and policy, the South acts with the West—not so much for the reason that the people of the South are suffering under heavy burdens of indebtedness, for in this respect they are less embarrassed than any other part of the country engaged in agricultural pursuits, nor for the reason that an exclusive gold basis of currency would injure the land-owners, who are the real capitalists of the South;

since the increase of the power of money over labor would only add to their power individually, while their cotton-crops are the most certain reliance for gold returns to be found in the world. But a contracted currency, and one that migrates to the money centres every spring, and makes only a short business tour to the South every winter, at the command of bankers and speculators, is not a stable means of wealth to the great body of the people. It will not stay at home to stimulate industry there, and to increase property, or sustain the value of property. It is tempted to the East to gather interest every summer, in the work of moving crops of wheat from the West, when it should be employed at home to build up the elementary sources and springs of prosperity. In these respects silver money is to them the great desideratum. The South can live without it, but it cannot prosper in that highest form of prosperity which consists in a well-fed, well-clothed, thrifty, vigorous, and contented laboring population. This is our greatest and most pressing necessity, and we must consult it.

The increase of a specie basis of currency, which for seventy years answered all the purposes of our civilization, commends itself to the feeling of conservatism in the South, which clings to the Constitution as the true exponent and measure of every power and duty of the Government, and to established theories, as the safest reliance of statesmanship. The Southern people believe that the Constitution has united gold and silver in bonds that are indissoluble in their quality of lawful tender in the payment of all debts, public and private, and that seventy years of experience have established the wisdom of that union.

These considerations, and others even more permanent in their influence on the future of the country, draw the South and the West together with powerful cohesion. Their chief business is agriculture, and the difference in climate and productions enables each section to interchange with the other a vast amount of the fruits of their toil. Nature has not merely facilitated, but has almost compelled, this immense traffic, by the peculiarities of our physical geography. The great rivers of the West, almost without exception, empty into Southern seas, indicating a law of Nature for the control of our commercial intercourse that has been violated heretofore only to the serious injury of the South and West.

A wide door is opened between the Cumberland and the Ozark Mountains, through which rivers run to the South and rivers run toward the North, and from the East and from the West, bringing together, by rapid and cheap communication, the productions of the widest and most fruitful fields in the whole world; and uniting, through these channels, the vital powers of the country, almost as the veins and arteries pour the tide of life back and forth through the human heart. The great Southern circle of iron-ores, sweeping from Missouri through Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas, to Virginia, like a girdle about the loins of the Union, studded at short intervals with great fields of coal, will, in the near future, become an additional inducement to more intimate commercial union between the South and the West. There is no competition in the wide world with this treasury of accumulated wealth; and the great valleys of the Tennessee, the Ohio, the Missouri, and the Mississippi, and the plains sloping to the South Atlantic and to the Gulf of Mexico, add this infinite treasure to their monopolies of grain, sugar, and cotton.

A community and intimate dependence of interests in the whole length and breadth and depth of these vast and varied resources of wealth and power will draw the South and West together into social, commercial, and political unity, on questions of policy, beyond the power of resistance or of future dis-severance.

Compelled by such irresistible influences, it is not to be expected of the South that it will decline political affiliation with the West, especially on all subjects that affect injuriously and wrongfully their common interests. Democrats and Republicans in the Eastern States unite in support of measures which benefit that section, and do not stop to consider the wishes of their political associates in other sections. The South makes no affectation of a disinterested spirit of self-sacrifice, which would beggar her people to enrich others, where the measures presented for consideration do not involve matters of right or social security, or do not endanger the constitution of the country. But the Southern people cannot be counted upon to enter on a crusade against the rights of the people of any section of the country, that rise to the dignity of rights protected by the Constitution.

The money question, after silver is restored to the currency as a legal-tender coin, is only a question of policy, and not of constitutional right. In every respect it is a question easy of adjustment, through the admitted powers of Congress. It is a sectional question alone for the reason that the great and frugal people of the Northeastern States are rich in money and public credits, while we of the South and West are embarrassed with lands that produce the true wealth of the country, but are almost worthless as compared with money. They are concerned in the higher price of money, and we in the lower value of money and the higher value of property.

While the evils complained of are grievous and destructive, the cause is temporary; and, if relief is furnished, the question will soon vanish from public attention, and opinions will be reformed by the experiences of the next few years. The South, in uniting with the West on the money question, will not combine against the States of the East, or of the Pacific coast, in a mere effort to gain political power for the aggrandizement of one section of the country at the expense of another section.

A party organized in the interest of agriculture merely, or to advance the interests of a section of country, is no more entitled to respect or confidence than a party organized to foster railroads or manufactories. When special interests control any party, it is unfit to be trusted with the great and general interests of the country. The principles of government which are asserted and maintained by a party are the only tests of its claims to public confidence. The money question, or the sectional combination of that question with the tariff, with the navigation laws, or the partial distribution of the national banks through the country, or other causes that have provoked complaint against the Northeastern States, would not be considered by the South as affording sufficient cause for political combination with the West; but Nature has decreed this union, and no sufficient reason exists for opposing it. But there are conditions connected with the alliance. The South believes in the doctrines of government that have so long formed the basis of the Democratic organization, of which the chief canons are, the right of the States to local self-government, and their complete autonomy in all matters that they have not conceded to the Federal Government; and the security of the per-

sonal liberties of the people, provided for and protected in the organic law.

In the political tenets of the Democratic party the South has found its safety in those recent and dreadful trials which put to the most extreme and dangerous test the existence of the States and the preservation of their civilization. If that party, its leaders and its masses, had no other claim on the gratitude, confidence, and fidelity of the South, this would be enough to draw us "with hooks of steel" close up to its heart. But there is not a principle and scarcely a policy of that party developed during its long and splendid history that is not accepted by the South as the safest and wisest guide for the country in the many troubles already met and overcome; and the best reliance for the future, in all the emergencies which our Government, so peculiar, and in many things yet so untried, may experience.

The theories of our American system of government are not yet tested by experience in every particular, and we still need the guidance of fixed principles. Last summer we had a new and remarkable revelation of difficult questions in the labor-strikes which, in a few hours, involved whole communities and even States in the dangers and horrors of civil commotion. What the Federal Government could do or should do, and what the States ought to do, were questions of serious moment, and they are not ended. Any day may bring forth troubles quite as appalling as those were. A great national party, to make its power available in such emergencies, must have principles of action which its members agree upon for its guidance.

The Democratic constructions of the Constitution are those upon which the South anchors its most abiding faith. They form a system in which every power of Government is limited to its designated sphere, and every right of the citizen is protected in its full scope and significance. In being drawn to the West as a plumb-line is drawn to the great wall-rock of the precipice over which it hangs, while the opposing wall is only a little less powerful in its attractions, the South will never yield its purpose to preserve its rectitude, and to measure the rights of other sections, as it desires its own rights should be adjusted, by the unvarying tests of the Constitution. Her friends everywhere are the friends of the Constitution, and she will never desert such men to form

alliances with those who ignore the Constitution, or who spurn its injunctions and deride its authority. Even "liberty, polluted with corruption, is not acceptable to the South;" and political power gained at the sacrifice of honor, duty, and gratitude, would be repugnant to the hearts of the people.

The "solid East," on the questions of finance, is not to the people of the South a subject of heart-burning. It does not excite resentment, as the idea of a "solid South" does in other sections. Our consolidation has been wrought by furnace and hammer, as steel is compacted and tempered on the anvil. The "solid East" has only congealed through a cold indifference to the sufferings of the West and South.

Our solidity is eternal, if the enemies of self-government in the States should so long survive; while the "solid East" will thaw and melt asunder under the influence of the warm sunshine and soft breezes of a bright day of prosperity near at hand. If the South and West unite to claim a Democratic candidate from the great agricultural regions for the presidency, it will be more by the compulsion of destiny than through the yearnings of desire; but, in any event, such union will not be formed at the expense of justice to any section, or by the sacrifice of any principle of the Democratic party.

The South will never unite in a sectional party movement merely to secure sectional aggrandizement. When the powerful union of kindred interests is formed in the heart of the country, the States around the borders will be anxious to know whether it is inspired with the love of justice and a sacred regard for all constitutional rights. The South, as a member of that Union, will answer with a cordial response to the honest assurance that has so often lifted her sinking heart, that her power will never be used to injure the weakest of her sister States, nor will its utmost authority be wanting to sustain and vindicate the rights of the humblest citizen.

Events which have been beyond the control of this generation have kept the South and West asunder for many years. These have been removed by a great revolution in popular sentiment. The last ripple of its waves has died on the shore, and peace is established forever between the estranged sections. If the West had possessed no deeper interest in the South than the

great body of the people of the New England States had, it is likely that the “erring sisters” would have gone in peace, and would have remained out of the Union until the influences now operating had recalled them. But the pressure of interest which is now removing all barriers to their political reunion forbade the separation, and to go in peace was impossible.

We are bound to “dwell together in unity.” We of the South will accept the affiliation without reluctance, but without any abatement of our confidence in the National Democracy, or of our zeal for the great principles of government which form the enduring basis of its organization.

And, whatever differences in respect to matters of policy may now or hereafter exist between us and the “solid East,” we shall not forget that they are evanescent, while the principles of Democratic unity are abiding; neither can we forget that to the Democrats of the Eastern States we owe debts of gratitude that will ever remain as a joyful burden upon our hearts, and a bond of perpetual confidence, regard, and fraternity, between us.

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